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ABSTRACT

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Global Demands for Quality: Realities and Myths in the Improvement of Initial Teacher Preparation

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Abstract

This article is based on experiences in the field of teacher education and of attempting to induce institutional change from a ministerial (hence, political) location. The first section considers the international context in relation to education and discusses how "quality" is conceptualised in policy documents. The second section looks at how concerns for quality are inserted in policy formulations regarding teacher education reform. It outlines what are real issues in teacher education but also notes myths about what might support or hinder the effectiveness of change in this area. In the third section, these issues (realities and myths) are examined in relation to the experience of reforming 17 teacher education institutions in Chile. The article finishes with reference to lessons and open questions arising from this experience of change.

International policy context regarding education

The World Declaration of Education for All (UNICEF, 1990) marked the shift in policy concerns at international and national levels from a focus on access (more children in school) to quality and equity (better schooling experiences for all). As the decade of the nineties progressed the issues of quality became more closely linked to globalisation and from that perspective acquired specific meanings. These policy concerns have been repeated in later international reports be they OCDE (1990), World Bank (1995), Delors (1996), UNESCO (1998), or regional reports such as ECLAC/UNESCO (1992. The concept of quality in these documents has two main focal points: quality as seen from the perspective of schooling and quality in relation to society and specifically to the effects and demands of globalisation. From the perspective of schooling quality is described in terms of processes, outcomes and contexts. Better processes are those that allow children and young people to understand what they learn and to use such learning in appropriate situations (Cf. Gardner, 1991; Perkins, 1992). Teaching must involve the use of strategies that encourage understanding, that begin with what students know, that pay attention to the different ethnic and cultural contexts in which they live, (Cf. Osborne and Freyberg, 1985) and that encourage self-reflection on learning or metacognition (Cf. Breuer, 1994). Teaching may involve also the encouragement of collaborative learning and the use of strategies that recognise multiple intelligences and different learning styles and stimulate learning through problem-resolution.

Better teaching processes have as their central purpose meaningful learning. But more is required than just the intention to produce learning, and so demonstrated evidence of learning has become an important target of educational policies. This in turn has meant

the development of measurement systems at country level intended to monitor progress in school attainment[1]. It has also brought about a renewed interest in international comparisons. The importance given to measured and comparable results is perhaps one of the most controversial policy issue both from the perspective of schools and teachers as within the sphere of policy discussions (Cf. Hamilton, 1998). A frequent criticism of national assessment systems is that what they measure tends to contradict the desired teaching and learning approaches; and that they encourage teachers to prepare for assessments rather than let assessments inform them about their teaching efforts. Even if the assessment system is properly developed, the manner of its use is also a source of controversy. Schools and teachers resist school leagues because generally their effects are to demoralise the lower achieving schools, their students and parents without offering real support for their improvement. International comparisons such as The Third Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) lend themselves to incomplete or partial interpretations, which may not accurately reflect the education results concerned[2].

Qualitative change in schools and improvement of learning opportunities are linked not only to teacher and teaching efforts but also to student background and educational contextual factors. To counteract the effect of student background factors there are and should be for policies that advocate affirmative actions for the improvement of teaching quality in schools attended by vulnerable student populations (Cf. Brown and Lauder, 1997)[3]. There also is demand for stronger contextual improvements ranging from school buildings and school learning materials to appropriate working conditions for teachers. To a greater or lesser degree, teachers around the globe feel that their own needs are not sufficiently addressed. Theirs are not just salary preoccupations but concerns that stem

from the heavy and multifarious demands arising from educational reform initiatives, in which they may have had little participation. Such is the case in Chile. Here, the teachers' union has felt left out of many reform decisions; a fact, acknowledged by those involved in the design and implementation of the reform (Cf. Avalos and Cox, 1999). South Africa also offers a case in point of curriculum reform that is implemented without teachers being prepared for it (Jansen, 1998).

Globalisation and meeting demands for human resources in the global market economy (CEPAL/UNESCO, 1992; Brown and Lauder, 1997) is the other pressure underlying discussions on educational quality. This discussion is a complicated one because it involves reassessing the kind of knowledge that should be at the heart of the curriculum and the teaching-learning processes. Economic growth and competitiveness require a larger population with capabilities to generate knowledge and apply it, to be creative at work and adaptive to new and different demands. These capabilities are not developed through a curriculum and teacher strategies oriented merely to basic skills and basic knowledge acquisition. Changes of this nature require that there be targeted interventions in the education system. In this context, there are at least two modes of responding (Cf. Brown and Lauder, 1997). On the one hand, despite a society organised around principles of competition, privatisation and competitive individualism, there are those who lay emphasis on regulation and standards' monitoring in the education system[4] to make sure that defined quality standards are achieved. On the other hand, while accepting the same overall economic principles and focusing on relevant pedagogical ones, a second group believes that their operation needs to be corrected for inequality. They argue, therefore, for state targeted investment in human resources (the schools of

the poor) and strategic investment in the economy (employability conditions). Such is certainly the case of the policy orientations in several Latin American countries, and Chile in particular (Cf. Filp, 1993).

Whatever the approach to it, globalisation is changing the goal posts for education. The encroaching economic order is one based on knowledge, knowledge generation and knowledge application for production, service, cultural creation and recreation (Ornelas, 1998). This accentuates the need for educational processes that move beyond the achievement of basic skills to the development of higher forms of thinking and to creativity. While this is possible in the scenario of the advanced societies, in the poorer contexts of those societies and in the rest of the world the possibility of an education that addresses higher order thinking skills and knowledge generation is still very distant. Yet the quality of life and of schools in these contexts will not and cannot improve in isolation from these global processes. Educational opportunities will have to become more flexible to provide opportunities for lifelong re-learning in line with demands of the changing society. This should mean the development of new forms of accrediting for what people know and can do, and not for the kind of school they went to.

Besides the economic implications of globalisation there is greater recognition that democracy and broad social participation are required in this interacting and open society. Wali Soyinka, the Nigerian writer, has recently pointed out as one of the great achievements of the twentieth century the acknowledgement of the rights of human beings and the struggle against their violations. But to maintain a stand in pro of these rights requires that people are educated to understand each other and respect themselves.

In this context, globalised education requires that special attention is given to these processes, including the experience of democratic participation (Cf., Lynch, 1997).

The demands on teacher education

Concerns about quality have led in the last two decades to numerous educational reform efforts around the world, involving both developed and developing countries. They have meant changes in the curriculum, changes in management structures (moves from decentralisation to centralisation and vice-versa) and in the length of compulsory schooling (including nomenclature changes such as from primary to basic education). There have been changes that lay emphasis on modernising the curriculum in order to prepare for the knowledge society. However, only recently, and almost as a second thought, teacher education has become an issue. Thus, in the second half of the nineties policy makers and even institutions such as the World Bank have shifted their priorities towards teachers. Moving beyond the emphasis on structure changes and increased funding for teaching and learning resources, we find more policies oriented towards empowering teachers through pertinent forms of initial teacher education and in-service professional development. The teacher education component in loan arrangements signed by the institutions (World Bank and regional banks) with recipient countries is more prominent than was the case ten years ago. National governments are also including among their policies the need to transform teacher education.

Countries in Latin America involved in educational reform are also looking at their teacher education provisions. Where changes occur, they vary from highly centralised directives on structures and required curricula to indirect stimulation and support for change. On the whole, there is a search for viable forms of improving the quality of new

entrants to the teaching profession, in line with the demands produced by reforms in the educational systems.

Realities and myths

The design of teacher education reforms, what and how to make sure they are effective and viable is, however, a complicated issue. In written form one finds a number of designs that look attractive. They are based on the best principles available for organising change found in international literature, they suggest interesting new approaches to professional preparation and contain directives for how these changes should occur. Yet, often the conditions for the intervention to be successful are not sufficiently taken into account. One of such conditions is the reality of the institutions themselves and of the experience or lack of experience of those who teach in them. The complaint voiced by an Argentine Normal School lecturer about her country's teacher education reform is an example. The Argentine government has written a national curriculum framework designed to be interpreted and adapted by the provincial authorities that oversee the Normal Schools. Responding to international views on how to prepare teachers, this curriculum introduced an "action research" component. Yet, as the lecturer speaking at an international meeting explained, research was not a requirement of the old curriculum and lecturers feel they are not prepared for the task of teaching research skills. At the root of the complaint is the fact that changing institutions with a long tradition is a complex affair and that the persons affected may not react as expected. The example also suggests that commendable aims need to be worked realistically and progressively into the institutions that are the subject of change, taking

account of existing realities and their constraints, and offering support to those who must alter their usual practices.

The above discussion illustrates two perspectives from which change propositions can be analysed. On the one hand, written into policies, one finds reasonable expressions of what should be changed in tune with "real" needs for improvement. On the other hand, one finds "inadequate perceptions" of how those policies would succeed and what might make them fail. As stated, these positions represent "myths" or simplified versions of change. The table below offers some examples of realistic and mythical statements.

Table 1: Reality and Myths in educational reform contrasted

Reality (Demands linked to the need to improve the quality of teacher education) There is need for:	**Myths** (Inadequate perceptions about conditions for meeting demands) That:
Thorough revamping of teacher education institutions	- Structural up-grading will do the job: e.g. from secondary to tertiary level institutions - from diploma to degrees
Curriculum review that updates contents, suppresses overlaps, provides more time for student thinking, practice and independent learning	- The review can be carried out solely from within the institutions or solely from without (set by others)
Better teaching and learning resources, information technology equipment and know-how	- Of themselves, as "factic pressures" they will do the job.
Paradigm changes in approaches to teacher education and improved capacity of teacher educators (in pedagogy and subject fields) to work with these new approaches.	- Exhortation and incentives will do the job
Improved quality of new recruits to teaching	-Those adequately qualified will not select teaching as a profession because inadequate working conditions weigh more than desire to teach
Standards setting and accreditation schemes to promote quality and relevance of programmes	- Standards setting will "guarantee' quality - To be objective, standards must be set from outside the sphere of those concerned

The statements in the left column above are found in policy documents around Latin America and in other developing countries, and are expressed in critical studies of teacher training programmes (Cf. Delors, 1996; UNESCO, 1998; Messina, 1997; Brazil, 1998). However, often the solutions in those documents and the change processes put into action either illustrate belief in the myths listed on the right hand side or disregard their importance as warning signs. This type of statement may be found written into policy formulations, corporate discourse such as that of teachers' unions as well as public views on the status of teachers (Cf. Davini and Alliaud, 1995; Lomnitz and Melnick, 1998). Two situations illustrate these "mythical" beliefs. One, is the belief that improvement of teacher education goes hand in hand with upgrading institutions to tertiary status[5] or producing new teacher profiles with a multiplicity of traits naively assumed to be teachable to future teachers. The other is that curriculum revision will be effective using a top-down approach or handing the revision entirely over to the institutions without providing outside assistance[6]. It is a mythical belief to hold that institutional upgrading (from secondary to tertiary) or the listing of teacher profiles will of themselves improve teacher education. It is also mythical to hold that imposed curriculum or curriculum redeveloped by people who are in need of change will result in better knowledge and learning processes.

In order to illustrate uses of the above table in examining a reform process, in the rest of the paper we deal with the case of teacher education improvement in Chile.

Reforming initial teacher education in Chile

Over six years, reforms in Chilean education covered the curriculum, introduced school-based teacher professional development, improved infrastructure and teaching resources, and provided free distribution of new textbooks[7]. However, these reforms had not touched teacher education. This was so despite strong evidence of a decrease in the quantity and quality of new teachers and a fall in the standards of teacher preparation[8]. There were several reasons for lack of government involvement in teacher education. A highly important one was the Ministry's unwillingness to intervene in an area over which it had no direct authority.[9]. But also there was overburdening produced by the numerous reform actions occurring during the first half of the nineties. Nevertheless by the time a new curricula for basic and secondary education was scheduled for implementation it became clear that teacher competence was a key conditioning factor for its success and would have to be attended to. By 1996 there was a sense that the reform of teacher education could not be postponed and that the Government itself would have to push it. Thus, in his address to the Nation (1996) the President announced the provision of a substantial fund (US 25 million) to improve teacher education, and a scholarships fund for able secondary school graduates interested in teaching. Institutions were asked to bid for these funds on the basis of 4-year teacher education improvement projects.

A process was set in motion whereby universities and professional institutes worked to prepare projects for submission. The Ministry of Education set up a co-ordinating body entrusted with organising the selection and the awarding process. Seventeen university projects, covering 80 per cent of student teachers, were awarded funding. This co-ordinating body has broadened its functions in order to maintain direct contact with the

universities involved, provide professional support and monitor implementation of the projects. It is also charged with organising external formative evaluations to be carried out from 1999 onwards until the end of the projects in 2001.

The projects

The projects were all developed on the basis of a diagnosis of the institution's conditions and their needs for change, and in line with terms and conditions set by the Ministry of Education. These stipulated that projects would have to deal with at least two change areas: the teacher education programme itself (curriculum, teacher education strategies and practical experience) and the quality of teacher educators (academic staff involved in teacher education programmes). Their characteristics have been described in another paper (Avalos, 1999) both in terms of their theoretical focus as well as of the main change areas. In a nutshell, the proposals reflect, at least at discourse level, current trends in teacher education: (a) a cognitive, constructivist view of learning, (b) a focus on reflective teaching, action-research, learning through doing; (c) a view of trained teachers as capable of interpreting reform requirements and of making autonomous decisions to improve the quality of their work, and (d) learning to teach as a collaborative task. All projects consider the need to restructure the teacher education curriculum in order to make it flexible, lighter in contents and stronger on links among themes and subjects, with emphasis on practical connections. All projects propose to increase contact of students with practical situations and schools gradually, from the first to the end of the four-to-five years of study.

Improving the quality of staff is central to the projects. This is being accomplished through several means: masters and doctoral studies, study visits abroad, working

agreements with institutions in other countries and bringing consultants and teacher education specialists to work with Chilean staff for set periods of time. The projects also include plans to stimulate retirements and recruit capable new blood.

An important expense item in the projects is the improvement of buildings, refurbishing of classrooms to fit different styles of work, as well as improvement of libraries and laboratories. Books, software, computers, and other multimedia and teaching equipment are also important expenditures included in the projects.

The projects are now in their second year of implementation and the close level of interaction between their co-ordinators and the Ministry's national co-ordinating body allows for the assessment of progress that is sketched below. Towards the end of the first year of implementation all the institutions were visited and the 17 project co-ordinators were interviewed on aspects relating to management issues. In order to judge the starting conditions and progress to date, students and teaching staff (both on a voluntary basis) were interviewed in focus group meetings and two teaching situations per institution were observed. Other baseline data was collected such as academic and professional experience of each institution's teaching staff. This exercise together with the institution's annual report provided a good view of the issues and situations that have to be watched.

Changing teacher education: a new curriculum and better teacher educators

The stimulus of winning a project and receiving what for some universities was the "biggest influx of funds" ever had for teacher education and even the biggest project at the time for the university, produced a remarkable momentum for reform. From the beginning of 1998 groups and activities were set in motion to develop the projected

changes. A major change area was the review of the curriculum. To support this task those involved in curriculum development at the 17 universities met during a workshop to discuss their plans for redesigning programmes. Discussions during this workshop convinced participants that a review of curriculum structures was an important first step, and that in particular they would have to shorten the time required for attendance to lectures and increase the time allowed for independent study. Such a change would also provide more time for lecturers to prepare work, tutor students and engage in research. Secondly, the various participants felt that the curriculum restructure should be governed by principles of "integration", "interdisciplinarity" and possibly be "problem-centred. They also favoured introducing workshops and seminars as complementary forms of delivery besides lectures. In the course of the year 15 universities completed at least the first phase of the review along these lines (setting a curricular structure), and are currently involved in developing new syllabuses for some of the courses as well as other curriculum activities.

For many reasons, it has not been easy to engage in this curriculum review. For example, shortening the teaching hours has been resisted by lecturers who are afraid of possible effects on their contractual time. It has also been difficult to negotiate content and structural changes with other Faculties involved (e.g. Arts and Sciences) that contribute to teacher education. Another difficulty is the lack of experience or models to illustrate how "grand" ideas can be turned into practice. For example, faced with the agreement to develop a professional curriculum centred on problems, lecturers at one of the universities stumbled in practice on how actually to write it. Their interest in this approach had been stimulated by knowledge of a similar teacher-training curriculum in

Sweden. But there is a distance between sensing what might be a "good idea, moving in its direction and being able to complete the task successfully. After a long year of struggling on their own, the planning group "discovered" that there was a useful model in Australia. One of the persons involved in the Australian programme was invited to spend the summer break working with the Chilean lecturers to convert their "idea" into a reasonable curricular structure.

The enterprise of developing a new curriculum has also included changes to the practicum experience. Until then most students experienced their first extended practical experience towards the end of their studies and for many the shock was a big one. During the focus group meetings students spoke about the weakness of the supervision they received. They recounted how often they were sent into schools to take charge of lessons with no little or no assistance from the classroom teacher or the university supervisor. This needed to be changed, and the reviews were considering the introduction of practical experiences from the first year on or at the most from the second year of studies, and were discussing how to improve the supervisory process. With the assistance of a specialist with experience in Professional Development Schools in the US, proposals to restructure the practicum experiences were discussed during a second workshop in 1998. As the year progressed, those institutions experimenting with early practical experiences were having successes but also encountering difficulties. Among these difficulties was the lack of enough schools willing to offer their premises for students. A mentorship scheme to prepare school supervisors but also to engage them as partners in the training process was needed. Student teachers were aware of this and had recommended during the focus group meetings that such a scheme be developed. But this

has taken time to get off the ground because universities are not able to provide monetary rewards to teachers. Some of the institutions, however, are offering free in-service course opportunities to teachers who help out with student teachers and these schemes are working well.

Modernising the contents of the curriculum, especially aligning these contents with what the schools will be teaching in the years to come, requires more than just the will to change. It requires updating of teaching staff, widening of their vision and supporting the development of appropriate capabilities. This is why a very important component of the change projects is capacity building. Universities have been cautious in organising adequate schemes to update their teaching staff partly because they do not have sufficient knowledge of opportunities available, or are not able to judge well what will or will not work. Yet in the past year, a variety of study visits took place that are synthesised in the next table.

Table 2: Types of programmes and placement for study visits of university academic staff in 15 Chilean universities (1998).

Type of Programme	Placement Institutions
Experiences in Special Subject Teaching	U. of La Habana (Cuba) Complutense, Alicante, Barcelona, Oviedo, Madrid universities (Spain) Modern Museum of Natural History (France)
Learning about the organisation of practicum experiences	U. of Northern Iowa (USA)
Multicultural teacher education approaches	U. of Quebec (Canada)
Pre-school and primary level teacher education	Golda Meier Centre (Israel), U. of Costa Rica
Teacher Education approaches	"Felix Varela" Pedagogical University (Cuba) Tel Aviv, Jerusalem and Haifa universities (Israel) U. of Northern Iowa (USA)

	Complutense, Autónoma de Madrid (Spain) U. of Colorado (USA)
Teacher Education curriculum	Seville and Alcalá universities (Spain)
Values' curriculum in teacher education	Barcelona (Spain) Leuven University (Belgium)

Changing teacher education. More and better quality of aspiring teachers

It is well known and documented that during the decade of the eighties and nineties the working conditions of teachers in many countries severely deteriorated (Cf. UNESCO, 1998). Teachers in Chile became employees of municipalities in a decentralised system and many were arbitrarily dismissed during this period[10] Despite a continued effort to increase salaries over the nineties these still have not reached the levels they had before the military government. This has meant that capable secondary school graduates think twice before deciding to enter a "licentiate in education" programme at one of the universities. During focus group meetings students made comments like these: "To work as a teacher means you will die of hunger", "more than half of those who are in my programme will not work as teachers when they finish university studies". These perceptions obviously cannot be changed from one day to another, but a concerted effort to improve social awareness about the importance of education and targeted efforts to recruit able students might yield some results or at least begin to reverse the situation. This has been happening.

The highly publicised efforts of the educational reform (despite misgivings and some criticism from the teacher union) seemingly are changing public perception about education and teaching. Also, the universities involved in the change programme have for the first time in many years initiated campaigns to interest secondary students in

entering the teaching profession. These have ranged from visits to local schools to speak about programmes, invitations to visit the university campus and structured workshops on the importance and opportunities for teaching offered to secondary students in their last semester of studies. The results are good. The new intake in 1999 is substantially higher than the year before and it clearly points to an upward trend

Table 4: Changes in first year student intake in 17 universities

1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999
5,465	4,571	4,440	5,104	5,200	6,019

However, while there are more applicants for primary level teaching (an existing shortage area), not enough apply for science secondary teaching.

Not only is it important to bring more students into teacher education programmes but it is important to improve their quality; and in the eyes of the Ministry of Education authorities this means higher school marks and higher university entrance examination scores (the Academic Aptitude Test). The scholarship fund has targeted this population. It offers a tuition scholarship to all those with good scholastic background and prefers applicants who choose primary teaching, as well as secondary science, English and Arts teaching. In its second year the number of applicants increased enormously in relation to the first year (1998), and the actual number of those who were awarded with scholarships to attend institutions of their choice went up from 122 to 240.

The above information shows the effect of other national policies geared to bring out the importance of teachers such as public recognition and prizes for good teachers (nominated as such by their peers).

How do the students involved in these programmes regard these changes? Discussions during focus groups showed that students held different opinions and that changes are not necessarily evident to them. Depending on their stage of studies they comment more or less favourably about their teacher education experience. Examples of their statements are given in the following table:

Table 5: Student teacher views of situations that do and do not exemplify improvement in teacher education processes

Evidence of change	Little evidence of change
In physics we no longer study formulas, what we do now relates to real things. We do inquiries; everybody talks and has opinions.	Professors talk, lecture, and explain. It's typical of what goes on in the specialist Faculties [*e.g. science, arts*]. We get traditional stuff in mathematics; we are taught "mathematical logic" but extracted from a book and memorised.
There is interchange during classes. They are not lectures. Cross-sectional themes are studied and from different disciplinary perspectives. We take charge of the class. We have both professor evaluation and self-evaluation. We are provided with topics and guides to develop them. In groups we prepare materials. Our professor is available for student consultation. There are two professors who are moving along with the changes. Others make us read a lot. In one of the courses we work with portfolios, I think it is interesting.	It's all teacher talk. It looks like the professor repeats year after year the same topics (students in higher years tell us about this). The professor talks all the time, we try to take part but there is no opportunity to do so. We have to dump back into the test exactly what he has said, if we want to get a good mark. In one of the courses where marks were low, we decided to memorise and marks improved. We are required not to think. The grammar we are taught is fifties' grammar. We were asked to read a lot in the sociology course (3 or 4 books) but no questions about our reading were asked in the test.

Managing and evaluating change projects.

This is an area where the experience of new learning is a daily one. One of the requirements set by the awarding committee was that co-ordinating units be established at every the institution headed by a Project Co-ordinator who would be the direct

interlocutor with the Ministry's national co-ordinating unit. This was easier said than done. At the time of the monitoring visits (about eight months after beginning implementation) only eight of the 17 universities had established proper co-ordination units with a head in charge. With these universities contacts were easy and the projects seemed to be working well as far as the execution of the proposed actions was concerned. Another eight universities had a co-ordinating "system" rather than a "unit", headed by an established authority (Academic Vice-Rector, Dean of the Faculty of Education or of an Education Department). This worked well in smaller universities where the Dean of Education was in close contact with staff and had capable assistants to manage the daily routines of the project's implementation. That was the case of two provincial universities, one in the north and the other in the south of the country. It did not work well very well in larger universities where authorities in charge did not have the time to work closely with staff in the thinking and executing of implementation. This became noticeable at the end of the year when financial reports showed for these institutions a lower level of and in some cases a seriously lower level of expenditure than planned. All these were recognised as warning lights that something was not working well, and were communicated to the university's highest authority (Rectors). As a result of this communication, five universities have reorganised or are in the process of reorganising their management structure.

The issue, however, is not a simple one to resolve. One of the reasons for these complex and unsatisfactory arrangements in half of the group of universities are tensions within the institutions and problems surrounding persons who do not go along with the changes. In their end of the year reports, most co-ordinators pointed these as a major source of

their unsolved problems. A factor also contributing to operational difficulties is the fact that authorities, from rectors to deans of faculties, are elected and that 1998 was an election year for most of the state universities

On the whole however, the amount of activities undertaken to date, improvement in teaching resources and in the management of the programme -it is felt that the change model is one that is working.

Realities and myths in the Chilean experience. Lessons being learnt

We now confront the experience of teacher education reform in Chile with what was presented in table 1 as realities and myths regarding change. All the concerns located on the side of reality were part of the decision to induce a change process in teacher education programmes. There was need for a thorough rejuvenation of institutional structures and for a curriculum review; it was important for those learning how to teach to do so with independence, thoughtfulness and understanding and to have sufficient exposure to practical experience. All of this would require opportunities for professors and teacher educators to update and improve their academic and professional capacity. Equally needed was an influx of resources to support teaching and learning such as books, computers, laboratory equipment.

The Chilean response to these needs tried to avoid simplifications in its change proposals. This is illustrated in three situations: the curriculum reform, capacity building of teacher educators and dealing with public rejection of teaching as viable professional alternative.

Without totally disregarding one of the myths -i.e. that those in need of change are equipped to plan their change- the Chilean approach has been to stimulate institutions to

produce their own curriculum proposals, though in the context of inter-institutional discussions (workshops). It leaves for a second stage the adjustment of these curricula to agreed-upon standards able to satisfy the needs of the educational system and provide comparability across institutions. However, institutions have been encouraged to seek assistance either at the development or review phases. That standards and accreditation of themselves will assure quality belongs to the mythical side of things if they are imposed without participation of all those concerned (the institutions, the teacher union, the schools and the Ministry of Education). On the other hand, results may be encouraging if a well though-out participatory process is put in place. This involves institutions working out their understanding of what competences can be expected from newly graduated teachers and bringing this understanding into harmony with what other institutions produce and discuss, including the teaching profession and the Ministry of Education[11].

The possibility of undertaking a productive review of the curriculum at the level of each institution is highly dependent on the capacity of their staff to engage in this process with critical awareness and new ideas. In this respect, it should not be assumed (a) that every teacher educator will want to engage him or herself in a change process, or (b) that they will change through exhortation or simple incentives. Though not altogether free from these assumptions, the Chilean strategy has been to lay emphasis on the principle of "widening vision" (Hargreaves and Fullan, 1993). Hence, before the programme was launched those responsible for teacher education programmes participated in an international seminar with specialists and thinkers from around the world to discuss issues relating to teacher education[12]. This set the stage for preparing the reform projects.

The institutions have continued the opening of vistas in several ways: study visits abroad, discussions with invited specialists, workshops etc. More recently the "opening of vistas" is becoming more targeted. For example, as referred to earlier in the paper, institutions are getting better at finding the right specialist to assist in developing a problem-based curriculum plan. They discern better when an external specialist competently points out needs or flaws or simple good points in a curriculum plan rather than simply comment on generalities. There also begins to be a shift from favouring open-ended study visits towards targeting institutions and academics abroad in order to establish academic and professional links with them. In the kind of world in which we live Education Departments and Faculties as well as individuals in other countries are eager to offer their services. This partly responds to genuine desire for collaboration and a sense of challenge, but it also reflects the need to sell expertise. Thus, there is no shortage of link offers and discerning which are useful for the context without basing the decision on affordability considerations only is an important skill that the Chilean institutions are starting to develop.

One of the assumptions outlined in the table that is both real and mythical is that nothing will change unless contextual factors change. In a country such as Chile, but equally in other Latin American countries, there is a strong public belief that unless teacher working conditions are suitably improved it will be impossible to get good applicants for the profession. The recent increase in the numbers of qualified student teacher recruits in a context where salaries are still low and working conditions (long teaching hours) still unsatisfactory proves, however, that "something can be done". This assertion is nevertheless a tentative one. We do not know whether increases will continue over the

next two or three years and whether those capable new student teachers provided with scholarships will persist and complete their studies successfully. If they do we will find them teaching in schools for at least three years and that of itself will be a good result; but how many will continue beyond those three years is of course an open question. Therefore, it remains true that to improve teacher working conditions is a powerful factor in the long term renewal of the quality of teaching.

Conclusion

Looking at this case of general overhaul of most of the teacher education in Chile, there are at least four lessons that have been learnt. The first one is that there are situations where change needs to be stimulated by government programmes and offered adequate financial support. Such change, however, has greater chances of success if conditions are ripe. Such conditions did exist in Chile. There was in place an education reform with a history of several years; and teacher education institutions were well aware that they lagged behind the times and the demands of the educational system. The Chilean case is thus a clear of what is required for incentives to work. They must be in line with contextual conditions and a degree of awareness of problems, and be so conceived that they are able to make a difference.

The second lesson has to do with what shortens the big distance between desire for change and actually achieving results. In the way to getting results there need to be good monitoring systems, feedback, advice, interaction and support. In other words, a "gentle" but constant vigilance is required on the part of a central co-ordinating body. This situation currently operates in Chile thanks to good and swift communication channels and the capacity to respond effectively to problems and demands.

That broadening of vision is essential is the third lesson. To imagine that the entire solution to problems lies with the people involved in the problem situation is a myth; there is need for outside stimulus, ideas and support. When this begins to happen in ways that meet the needs of the programme, then creative ideas encounter the wisdom and experience of others and get transformed into viable programmes. Vision, however, means more than the offer of advice by any outsider. In the Chilean case it has meant, and will probably continue to mean, learning and reflecting from what others in different geographical, social and cultural contexts have thought about teacher education and what and why their experiences have been considered successful. And then examining in the context of local needs and situations what and how the experiences of others may be used.

A fourth important lesson is that policy support is needed. In Chile, the Ministry of Education has slowly but definitely moved away from the view that teachers are a less than important ingredient in the Reform towards realising that their support and their capabilities are essential to the success of the reform. This, however, does not mean that difficulties with the teachers' union have been overcome. There is still a long way to go to improve relations and there will be need for greater involvement of the teachers' union in matters relating to the reform. Nevertheless, there is a public discourse that many are hearing, which favours the importance and the role of teachers. And this discourse has been followed by concrete actions to prove it.

Finally, still an open question is how to evaluate the change processes taking place, with what methods and what focus. How long does it take to see results? What results can be expected? Competent teachers, but at what level? These are issues that have not yet been

settled though there is an on-going process to settle them. External evaluators are needed. But what kind of persons, from where and what should they be asked to do is still under discussion. Careful decisions will have to be taken to insure that the process serves both to inform the government and society about progress, and to provide universities with supportive feedback to adjust their strategies or celebrate good results. The future of an education of quality for all as well as one, which is, respondent to global needs has much to do with the quality of teachers.

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NOTES

[1] In Latin America, almost all countries have instituted some form of system evaluation (Cf. Wolff, 1998).

[2] See for example, Brown's (1998) interesting analysis of the mode in which TIMSS results were reported in the media in the United Kingdom presenting a distorted and one-sided account of results that ignored achievements in certain areas while focussing on failures in others.

[3] For an example, see the case of the 900 Schools Programme in Chile that has targeted the poorest of primary schools and provided extra assistance (resources and teaching improvement) to raise the attainment of children attending these schools (Cf. Cox and Avalos, 1999).

[4] The reform taking place in Great Britain from the late eighties on is an example of this concern for regulation in the midst of an ideology of market economy.

[5] This is a major trend in Latin America where primary teacher education still occurs in secondary level Normal Schools or runs parallel to tertiary level teacher education programmes. Messina (1997) notes that the major change effort of the nineties is to raise these programmes to tertiary level through a transformation of Normal Schools into Higher Normal Schools.

[6] Examples of these beliefs are the initial failed attempt of having Normal Schools in Bolivia re-write on their own a new curriculum and the approach chosen by the Argentine Ministry of Education to produce centrally a teacher education curriculum framework to be developed into teaching programmes at the decentralised provincial level for the local teacher training institutions.

[7] For a description of the educational reform in Chile see the Ministry of Education's publication *Reform in progress: quality education for all*, Santiago: 1998.

[8] Chile offers a good example of arbitrary changes of institutional status of teacher education. While all secondary teacher preparation had traditionally been carried out at universities, primary preparation was offered by secondary level Normal Schools until 1965. With the reform beginning that year Normal Schools became tertiary level institutions attached to University Faculties of Education. During the military government a set of arbitrary changes took place. First, the restructuring of all pre-school, primary and secondary teacher training programmes into professional institutes of tertiary but not university level (a de facto lowering of status of the teaching profession), and then a few years later, the return of teacher training to universities leaving only a few Professional Institutes charged with non-degree level primary teacher training.

[9] Autonomous universities over which the State has little power of academic control offer almost all teacher education programmes. This is so even though it funds substantially the so-called "traditional" universities (State universities and those established before the growth of private universities began in the 1989s).

[10] The military dictatorship in Chile affected the conditions of teachers in several ways. One that was perceived to be particularly damaging was the decentralisation of the system that transferred ownership of state schools to municipalities and with this, the power to hire and fire teachers. Until the return to democracy in 1990 municipal authorities were appointed by the military government and not elected democratically as they are now. Teachers find hard to forget the arbitrary dismissal of 8,000 teachers in 1986 by municipal authorities.

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[11] Within the context of the Higher Education Improvement Project (MECE Superior) the Ministry of Education has set up an Accrediting Committee to engage in the review of professional preparation in Chilean universities. This Committee will also consider teacher education institutions.

[12] A book with the papers presented and discussed at this seminar has been published (Avalos and Nordenflycht, 1999).

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